



NAPE Newsletter



Is Land Grabbing Real or a Myth in Uganda?



Land is not just a resource but a source of life, identity and sustenance for millions of Ugandans. Unfortunately, the rising trend of land grabbing is threatening this critical foundation. Large-scale agricultural ventures, extractive industries and infrastructure projects are displacing thousands of people from their ancestral lands, driving a deep wedge between local communities and their traditional livelihoods. Land grabbing is often portrayed as a path to economic development, but for those who feel its intense impact, it's a story of dispossession, exploitation and environmental degradation.

Families are being uprooted without fair compensation, their land handed over to powerful corporations and foreign investors in deals that often take place without adequate consultation or consent. As a result, food security is compromised, forests and wetlands are destroyed and social conflicts escalate.

The most vulnerable groups particularly women, children, people with disabilities (PWDs) and indigenous communities are paying the heaviest price. They depend on these lands for agriculture, shelter, cultural practices and when displaced, they face uncertain futures with little means of recovery. Uganda's environment is also suffering as land grabs contribute to deforestation, soil degradation and the depletion of vital water resources.

As NAPE, we are standing firm in our fight to stop land grabbing. Our role is not only to challenge illegal land acquisitions but also to empower local communities with the tools they need to defend their rights. We are working towards exposing the often hidden deals that strip communities of their land, demanding transparency and accountability in land governance. More importantly, we are giving voice to the voiceless in these processes.

We call upon the government, civil societies and international partners to uphold the principles of equity and justice when it comes to land use. The need for a national dialogue on land rights is more urgent than ever. The clearly enforceable policies that respect customary land ownership and ensuring fair compensation for those affected are essential to protecting Uganda's people and environment.

Frank Muramuzi
Executive Director, NAPE.

EDITORIAL

Land grabbing occurs when land that was previously used by local communities is leased or sold to outside investors, including corporations and governments. Typically, the land is taken over for commodity crops to sell on the overseas market, including for agrofuel and food crops. However, land grabbing also occurs to clear land for tree plantation (grown for carbon offset), protected reserves, mines and can often result from speculative investments when funds predict the high rate of return from land investments.

For the past 20 years, the government has promoted industrialization and foreign direct investment as growth drivers that will propel Uganda into social and economic transformation. However, these initiatives have been accompanied by several issues such as gross violation of environmental and human rights, food insecurity, climate change disasters, community involuntary displacement, sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) all of which are connected to the land acquisition issues which is largely contributed by the corporate investment.

In this issue, we present to you the different forms in which land is being grabbed by corporate investments from the communities in the face of development, these include; Land grabbing for East African Crude Pipeline (EACOP), land grabbing for flower farming-Case of Rosebud Ltd in Uganda, wetlands grabbing for commercial development, the unhealing wounds of oil palm establishment on the project affected persons in Kalangala and a life of local farmers made hard by Green Resources Company in Busoga forest reserve.

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EDITORIAL TEAM

1. Mr. Frank Muramuzi
2. David Kureeba
3. Betty Ninsiima
4. Adrine Twongyeirwe
5. Omony Polycarp

Land Grabbing for East African Crude Pipeline(EACOP)

Compiled by Franklin Mushabe (NAPE Board Member)



Collection of pipes to be laid along the pipeline route. COURTESY PHOTO/EACOP.

EACOP, a 1443 kilometer long pipeline will transport Uganda's crude oil from Kabaale-Hoima to Chongoleani peninsular near Tanga port in Tanzania for export to the international market. In Uganda, the pipeline(296km long) traverses 10 districts, 25 sub-counties and 171 villages and the remaining 1147km are in Tanzania.

However, the land acquisition processes for EACOP has left many individuals in puzzle where the Government under the pretense of serving the national interests is constantly using the legal system as a weapon to enable EACOP land grabs despite Article 26 of the

1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda that guarantees the right to property, fair and adequate compensation in cases of land acquisition and consent should be sought before any project, plan or action takes place, it should be independently decided upon and based on accurate, timely and sufficient information provided in a appropriate way for it to be considered a valid result or outcome of a collective decisionmaking process.

The Government constant push for EACOP is quiet unacceptable, On October 1st, 2024, the Masaka High Court ruled against over 80 Project-Affected Persons (PAPs)

from Lwengo, Kyotera, and Rakai districts after being sued by the Government in September 2024 requesting Court orders to allow the land owned by the affected individuals to be used by EACOP, allow their compensation to be deposited in Court accounts and mandate to evict them from the EACOP demarcated land. The ruling did not only affect 80 individuals but also their dependants whose livelihoods are rooted on the land.

(Read more: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/court-allows-eviction-of-over-80-households-in-way-of-eacop--4784610>)

Free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous communities to be affected by any capitalist-led project that will result in their involuntary displacement is a right recognized by various international treaties, which include EACOP that has undertaken to respect. Promoters of the project must therefore consult persons affected by the project before and consent must be given freely after receiving adequate information.

EACOP Project affected persons (PAPs) receive very little information on the land acquisition process, both in regards to their rights and the complaints procedures as well as to the compensation payment dates. Sometimes they do not even know the compensation amount they are to receive.

PAPs are also concerned about the negative impacts of the EACOP, including the risks of accidents, health risks and potential environmental damage and no information is given to them how the pipelines will affect their living conditions and livelihood, both during the construction and operation phase.

EACOP affected individuals are asked to sign consent forms as part of the land acquisition process and consent must be given freely, prior to the acquisition of the land and only after receiving adequate information. Our research revealed that, in addition to receiving inadequate

information, EACOP affected persons are not given any choice in the matter, their families are being coerced into giving up their land and those who refused the the little compensation are being dragged to Court.

Several EACOP PAPs were pressured into signing the consent forms. Others said that if they had refused, they would still lose their land and would receive no compensation. Communities are not willing to give up their land due to the inadequate compensation payments, which are not enough to buy equivalent land or assets.

The vast majority of PAPs who know how much they are to be compensated complained that the amount was not an par with the value of their land, and would not enable them to buy other land of an equivalent size and quality. In addition, many were surprised at the amount, which they were

informed of at the signing of the consent forms.

Restrictions are being imposed on indigenous communities affected by EACOP on how they are to use their land before even receiving any compensation, this will result into a flagrant violation of the right to property and these restrictions are jeopardizing the lives of families affected by the project, mainly farmers who depend on the land for their livelihoods as their primary and only means of survival.

The costs of EACOP on human beings, climate and on the environment are quite simply unacceptable. It is my view that the land acquisition processes for EACOP should be reconsidered so that the affected communities obtain adequate reparation and its impact on the environment should be carefully reassessed.



Land grabbing for flower farming, case of Rosebud Ltd in Uganda.

Compiled by; Kemigisha Ruth (Accountant)



Green houses at Rosebud Ltd. Rosebud Photo

A wetland is a place in which the land is covered by water-salt, fresh or somewhere in between-either seasonally or permanently. Lutembe bay wetland is a Ramsar site and Important Bird Area (IBA) on Lake Victoria located about 4 km off the Kampala – Entebbe highway from Namulanda and was leased to Rosebud Ltd in 2002 for flower farming.

According to Heather in an interview by American Farm Bureau Foundation for agriculture defines Flower farming as the cultivation of flowers, ornamental plants for gardens or the floral industry and depends inten-

sively on water in order to grow. Lutembe Bay wetland is important for wetland edge agriculture and also known as a home for migrating birds from Europe, spawning ground for fish such as Lungfish and Clarias, harvesting papyrus, tourism, supports neighboring communities with water, brick laying, sand and clay for building.

Rosebud Ltd specializes in the production of cut roses for export and is based in Entebbe. It is the country's largest exporter of roses with greenhouses that cover a total of 80 hectares for production and exporting over 180 million stems annually. Rosebud Ltd started its operations

in the year 2000, initially the farm started with 13 hectares of timber green houses. As of today, Rosebud Ltd has grown tremendously and is now the largest flower export company and is fully established as a modern flower farm in Namulanda Village, off Entebbe Road, Wakiso District in Uganda and because of this expansion there was an encroachment on Lutembe Bay wetland in 2004.

The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) authorized its expansion into Lutembe Bay wetland which had been ruled as "encroachment" in the mid-year of 2003 by government

authorities. This was after the directive given by the Vice President Gilbert Bukenya in December 2003 to NEMA to clear Rosebud Ltd to cultivate flowers. He went ahead and said that “anybody blocking Rosebud is an enemy of the government”. The NEMA Chief Executive Director Dr. Aryamanya Mugisha then issued Rosebud Ltd the Certificate of Approval to commence their operations in the wetland till today. The fight against encroachment on the wetland has been on going as environmentalists and environmental organizations have put together efforts for this cause.

In August, 2013 in an interview done by The San Diego Union-Tribune with Frank Muramuzi the Executive Director of National Association of Professional Environment(NAPE) about the expansion of Rosebud Ltd into the Lutembe Bay wetland, he said that “This is corruption of the highest order because that kind of activity is not allowed in the wetland. But it is not too late. We want to take them to court.”

NAPE together with Green Watch, Nature Uganda and Advocates for Natural Resources Governance sued the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and Rosebud Limited for having encroached on the Lutembe Bay wetland with a claim to have breached articles 50 and 22 of the 1995 Consti-



Gulls and Terns, one of the sources of tourism attraction in Uganda threatened at Lutembe bay wetland

tution which advocates for the right to a clean and healthy environment. Read more; (<https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/activists-protest-as-rosebuds-ltd-expands-namulanda-farmland-into-lake-victoria>)

Today, the encroachment of Rosebud Ltd on the Lutembe Bay wetland has had significant negative impacts on the people in the surrounding areas and aquatic life which has led to loss of habitat for the aquatic birds, threat from the agricultural chemicals used, increased flooding due to loss of important supporting and regulatory functions, water pollution as wetlands are natural filters for waste waters, sewage and surface run-off, shore line stabilization, moderation and nutrient retention.

For this case, NAPE in partnership with other organizations has strived to stop land grabbing but with little success. Until today,

wetlands and other natural resources are being encroached on.

In order to avoid further encroachment on the wetland, my advice to the government is; Adopt flower irrigation schemes so that they are shifted from the wetlands, creating awareness to the public about the importance of the wetland, structures in the wetlands should be demolished, proper demarcation of wetlands and titles in the wetlands should be cancelled as directed by the president.

The public needs to come together to fight for nature’s rights or else Uganda is at the risk of facing extinction of its wetlands and other natural resources.

Wetlands Grabbing for Commercial Development

Compiled by; Adrine Twongyeirwe (Information and Communication Officer)



Part of Hamis Kiggundu's home that was constructed on the lakeshore(Lake Victoria).Photo by Karim Ssozi

“Uganda’s Precious Ecosystems are facing intense pressure as Investors Snatch up Vital Wetlands”

Uganda’s wetlands, once a sanctuary for biodiversity and natural beauty, are facing an existential threat. The continuous push of commercial development driven by endless demand for land has led to widespread wetland grabbing. This ecological vandalism endangers the environment, local communities, and the nation’s future.

Wetland coverage in Uganda in 1994 was 15.5% and has reduced to 9.5% as of 2024. The loss and degradation of wetlands is as a result of largely commercial developments such as the construction of Munyonyo Resort Hotel at the shoreline of Lake Victoria, the construction of residential estates has led to destruction of Nakigalala Wetland, Wakiso District that was once a fishing ground, Rose bud flower farming has led to destruction of Lutembe Bay wetland which was once a vital migratory

bird habitat, flood control area at Kinawataka Wetland is partially destroyed for a shopping mall and estates, rice growing in Lwera wetland, Namanve ecosystem converted into an industrial park. This has led to loss of biodiversity and ecosystem disruption, increased flood risk and water pollution that has claimed the lives of many people, displaced local communities and livelihoods are compromised in addition to worsening climate change (global warming).

All these show the “Dynamics of land acquisition for development in the Global South” as referred to the recently launched NAPE compendium. Find it on NAPE website (<https://nape.or.ug/download/nape-compendium-report/>) for more information. This elaborates how the capitalists hide in the word “development” but their main target is to grab land.

Wetland grabbing is a ticking time bomb for Uganda’s environment and economy. We’re losing our livelihoods and cultural heritage to greedy investors. The government must prioritize environmental protection over short-term gains through Strengthen-

ing legislation and enforcement to protect wetlands, conducting thorough Environmental and social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) for development projects, engaging local communities in decision-making processes, Promoting sustainable land-use planning and eco-friendly development through research and technology development, women empowerment initiatives among others. Uganda’s wetlands are precious national assets, deserving protection and preservation.

The government, civil society, and private sector must join forces to halt wetland grabbing and ensure sustainable development and advocate for cancellation of

all titles in the wetlands as directed by the President of Uganda. If this is not done the future of Uganda’s economy and her people are all doomed for a curse.



Munyonyo Speke Resort Hotel constructed at shoreline of Lake Victoria

The unhealing wounds of Oil Palm Establishment On the project affected persons in Kalangala.

Compiled by; Ainomugisha Shiba (M&E officer and Researcher)



Oil palm plantation, in the Kalangala Islands of Lake Victoria

In 2003, the government of Uganda through the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries launched a National Oil Palm Project to scale Oil palm production in different parts of the country. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) which was the main donor and the sole company BIDCO, Oil Palm Uganda Ltd partly owned by Wilmar unveiled the plans to establish 40,000 Hectares of Oil Palm across the country. Crude Oil mills and a refinery were set up to guarantee market for the Oil Palm farmers produce.

Kalangala which is an Island dis-

trict in Lake Victoria was one of those areas that had been spotted for oil palm project. I acknowledge the fact that the government of Uganda had the best intentions while establishing the project like eradicating poverty by exchanging income with the palm fruits to the palm oil farmers and those to work in the oil plantations, improving social facilities and providing employment in the area. Diamond Chancoo, the chairperson of Kalangala Oil Palm Growers Trust (KOPGT) then said unlike other companies where dividends are shared among shareholders, the farmers in Kalangala agreed

to invest it in social services; “We will invest in community services, such as roads, renovating health facilities and schools so that the community benefits,” This meant that the project was to improve the wellbeing of the people in Kalangala district.

However, implementation of the project strategy fell short on a number of aspects, leading to many negative impacts on the intended project beneficiaries as well as on the environment. More than 100 Ugandan farmers were evicted from their land to make way for oil palm plantations.

In 2015, Farmers in Uganda led by Muyiisa John instituted a case in the high court of Masaka against Sylvia Gloria Nakitto, Bhimji Depar Shah Co. Ltd (BIDCO) and Oil Palm Uganda Ltd (OPUL) for evicting them from their land and not compensating them like they had agreed. They prayed to court for restitution for their grabbed land and fair compensation for damages for the three years after their land had been taken for plantation development. NAPE then came in to support the plaintiffs who had been affected by this project. On 13th January, 2017, a complaint was filed by the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) on behalf of the Bugala Farmers to the office of Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO) concerning issues that relate to environmental damage due to deforestation for the purposes of growing oil palm plantations, compensation for expropriated land, impacts on agricultural activities, and loss of livelihood.

CAO-facilitated dialogue and the complaint was referred to CAO's Dispute Resolution function. As a result of CAO's dispute resolution process, the parties reached an agreement in August 2017 to address the complaint issues. CAO monitored the implementation of the agreement, as agreed by the parties, and upon completion of the monitoring phase. Even after CAO had intervened in the matter, a few people were compensated and others were not even given anything. This left many people displaced hence loss of property and lives. In addition to that, Communities had turned to the remaining protected reserves for provisioning, regulating, supporting

and cultural services to the point that encroachment was visible, for example, in Towa forest in Bugala Island communities took over some of the gazetted land for farming. There was also encroachment on some parts of forest reserves and other natural resources by out growers who plant oil palm in the buffer zones. Moreover, the buffer zones that were stipulated as per the EIA report (MAAIF 2003) were not adhered to of 200m from the shoreline. At some points it was less than 100m from the shoreline, a case in point in areas of Buguzi and Bwendero.

Oil palm growing is responsible for the new food insecurity in Kalangala which used to be the food basket for neighboring mainland districts (such as Masaka) but now depends on neighboring districts for food. With all efforts made by NAPE and other organizations like Greenwatch, the government continued to allow oil palm plantations in other districts like Buvuma in 2012. Up to now, people in Kalangala district still feel the impact of this project because a good number of project affected

persons have never been compensated and haven't gotten land for cultivation hence leading to poverty.

Therefore, we as NAPE call upon the government of Uganda to;

- Comply and enforce the policies regarding social and environmental impact assessments before the commencement of any project.
- Conduct comprehensive research on the impacts of land grabbing on community livelihoods in Uganda by large scale land based investments.
- Domestic international treaties, conventions, protocols and any other binding agreements regarding land and sacred sites such as African Union resolution (AU 372) on sacred natural sites and territories, Paris agreement on climate change among others.

If land grabbing is not addressed with immediate effect, Uganda's beautiful nature and community livelihoods are at stake.



Lives of local farmers made hard by Green Resources Company in Bukaleba Mayuge district.

Compiled by; Kureeba David (Project coordinator forest and Biodiversity)



Eucalyptus plantation owned by Green Resources Company in Bukaleba

Government of Uganda leased Busoga forest reserve to Green Resources company which was established in 1995 and is owned by New Forests' Africa Forestry Impact Platform ('AFIP'). Green Resources is East Africa's largest forest development and wood processing company that manages 38,000 ha of plantation forest in Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda. It also deals in carbon offsetting for polluting entities. Part of the land leased to green resources was being used by communities to grow food, rear animals, get firewood, medicinal herbs, pick fruits among others.

The alledged forest reserve land

on which communities for long used to derive their livelihoods was unfortunately taken and given away to the company and led to forceful eviction. Such unfortunate incident should not have been experienced by the nationals. Green resources, the wood process company also deals in carbon trading through the sale of emission permits thereby encouraging industrialized countries to keep polluting under the disguise of carbon sequestration, hoodwinking forest owners and governments by paying them peanuts to keep their forests sinking carbon dioxide.

Worth noting is that Carbon trading is a false solution to climate

change as it does not address the emission reduction from the source of production but rather hoodwinking communities and governments that tree planting for carbon sequestration can address global warming caused by industrialization and other sources like agriculture.

Such kind of carbon emission wouldn't allow nations to meet their target of global temperatures reduction to 1.5°C if polluting countries continue their business as usual. While its perceived that carbon trading can generate revenue for local communities through sustainable forest management and carbon credits,

there's a risk that benefits may not trickle down to local communities, exacerbating existing economic disparities. It should be noted that most carbon trading businesses are usually established on land that was initially being used by communities for food production a case of Bukaleba, Nakalanga and Walumbe areas among others.

Green resources company displaced more than 800 peasant farmers, who ended up settling on the shores of Lake Victoria as fisherfolk and others dispersed. Unfortunately, when the government started enforcing indiscriminate fishing laws, communities ended up being hopeless because of landlessness as they had nowhere to run to. The fishing restrictions put by the authorities, pushed people including the youth to boda boda riding as they could easily be accessed on loan and others resorted to grazing goats and cows. Cattle grazing within grown up trees which the company had allowed according to communities was later changed and denied them grazing access. This turned out to be a business venture where the forest authorities in close collaboration with the company confiscating cows and taking them to a designated paddock in Bukaleba for custody until a levied charge of between 10000-30000ugx is levied on them and the owners pay. Cows are locked in the paddocks established by the company/National Forest Authority(NFA) once found in the forest until a fine is paid otherwise they stay in the paddock for as many days as the owner raises



The cattle owners waiting at the paddock where their cows had been seized and confined pending payment of fines

money to rescue them.

In a recent visit to Bukaleba cows of communities had been locked in the paddock because they were found crossing in the forest. It was a Friday the person in charge of handling the offences of individuals had told cattle owners that he would only be available on Monday two days after. This punishment to animals did not take into account the small calves that had been left home and the community people that depended on the milk gotten from the animals. Communities also said that most times when the cows are locked in the kraal for many days when they get out they fall sick and most of them even die. As if that was not the only problem, the Bodaboda riders were going through hard time as they crossed the forest once found with dry wood in form of firewood on the Bodaboda. Their motorcycles are impounded and one would be compelled to pay a fine of two hundred and fifty thousand shillings.

Unfortunately, going through the forest had turned out to be a big problem as one of their colleagues who had disappeared from Nakalanga was found dead and rotten in the forest. Communities picked him from the forest and took him for burial as for the cause of the death was not known. While this company came to do business, the locals are food insecure because the land in which they used to grow food is now covered with trees for wood production and carbon trading.

This is to call upon the authorities to look into the following; NFA should harmonize the good working relationship and good neighborhoodness between the company and locals, the fines levied on bodaboda for being found with firewood for domestic use should be removed and the Company and the forestry authority should make it safe for bodaboda riders to operate with safety in the forest area.

Pictorial



The launch of NAPE compendium entitled “The Dynamic of Land Acquisition for Development in the Global south” at Nican Resort Hotel, Kampala on October 3rd, 2024



NAPE represented by Kureeba David(5th standing from the right at the back) with other ABN partners after meeting members of East African Legislative Assembly on the need for farmer managed seed system.



Betty Ninsiima(front 2nd left) and David Kureeba(2nd right) of NAPE attended one week workshop on Empowerment of science journalist and CSOs in Uganda and Rwanda for research-based Advocacy (EReBA) project



Betty Ninsiima(left) a Regional Representatives Gender Justice and Dismantling Patriarchy(GJDP) working group handed souvenirs to participants during the meeting organised by Friends of the Earth Africa annual general meeting in Ghana

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Websites: www.nape.or.ug / www.greenradio.ug

Tel: +256-414-530181

Mob/WhatsApp: +256 772 492362

x: @NapeUg

Facebook: @NAPEUG

LinkedIn: NAPE UGANDA

Skype: napeuganda

Tiktok: @nape.uganda

Email: napeuganda@yahoo.com, nape@nape.or.ug